

December 16, 2008

## Mobile phones have become the latest tool to prevent Avian Influenza



(Top) Chai Nat Governor introduced the demonstrating team.  
(Bottom-Left) USAID Representatives greeted participants on stage.  
(Bottom-Right) Farmers in the workshop led by Chai Nat Livestock Development Administration and the Chai Nat Health Administration.

**Chai Nat. December 16, 2008** – More than 350 farmers joined in a workshop this month with agricultural experts to learn how to protect their poultry and themselves from Avian Influenza as part of a USAID program with the private sector that expects 2 million more farmers to get this life-saving information via a special mobile phone “farmers’ hotline”.

In workshops and demonstrations at the largest bird park in Thailand, farmers learned how to keep poultry separated with fences and nets, use rubber gloves when handling birds, detect symptoms of bird flu and other techniques to prevent the spread of avian influenza.

The event, broadcast on regional radio, also publicized a program to answer influenza questions via mobile phones by dialing \*1677. The increasing popularity of mobile phones among Thai farmers means that the key messages of avian influenza prevention are expected to reach some 2 million farmers in 20 provinces throughout Thailand.

The program, partly funded by USAID and managed by the Kenan Institute Asia, brought together Total Access Communications (DTAC), I.N.N. Press, operator of the Happy Station radio network, the Sam Nuek Rak Ban Kerd Foundation, the Department of Livestock Development, the Department of Disease Control and local farmer networks and local officials.



(L to R) Jiranya Ratchinda, Kenan Institute Asia GDA-AI Project Manager, Michael Silberman, USAID Regional Alliance Builder, Dr. Sudarat Damrong-watanapokin, USAID AI Specialist.

The event was part of a program under USAID’s Global Development Alliance (GDA) that encourages collaboration between the private and public sectors to enhance the impact of development activities.

USAID has invested millions of dollars in the region including Thailand, Laos, China, Burma and Vietnam to prevent the spread of the avian flu. Effective communication is the key to this effort and the program launched in Chai Nat showed how mobile phones and local radio can play a critical role in telling farmers how they can play their role in reducing the danger of avian influenza.